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POEMS

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POEMS

MY COUNTRY

WILD EDEN

THE PLAYERS' ELEGY

THE NORTH SHORE WATCH

ODES AND SONNETS

BY

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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PREFACE

THE author has here collected all of his published verse, except a fragment, "The Roamer," which he reserves in the hope of completing that poem; and a considerable number of pieces, hitherto either uncollected or unpublished, are also included. The volume represents the passing of many years, and begins from days almost of boyhood. If the result is less than it should have been, there are here some gleanings of time from a life never so fortunate as to permit more than momentary and incidental cultivation of that art which is the chief grace of the intellectual life. The author can claim only that he has written no line except for itself alone.

G. E. W.

BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS,
August 13, 1903.

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At Gibraltar

I

ENGLAND, I stand on thy imperial ground,
Not all a stranger ; as thy bugles blow,
I feel within my blood old battles flow —
The blood whose ancient founts in thee are found.
Still surging dark against the Christian bound
Wide Islam presses ; well its peoples know
Thy heights that watch them wandering below ;
I think how Lucknow heard their gathering sound.
I turn, and meet the cruel, turbaned face.
England, 'tis sweet to be so much thy son !
I feel the conqueror in my blood and race ;
Last night Trafalgar awed me, and to-day
Gibraltar wakened ; hark, thy evening gun
Startles the desert over Africa !

At Gibraltar

II

THOU art the rock of empire, set mid-seas
Between the East and West, that God has built ;
Advance thy Roman borders where thou wilt,
While run thy armies true with His decrees ;
Law, justice, liberty — great gifts are these ;
Watch that they spread where English blood is spilt,
Lest, mixed and sullied with his country's guilt,
The soldier's life-stream flow, and Heaven displease !
Two swords there are : one naked, apt to smite,
Thy blade of war ; and, battle-storied, one
Rejoices in the sheath, and hides from light.
American I am ; would wars were done !
Now westward, look, my country bids good-night —
Peace to the world from ports without a gun !

False Dawn

GOD dreamt a dream ere the morning woke
Or ever the stars sang out ;
The glory, although it never broke,
Filled heaven with a golden shout ;
And when in the North there's a quiver and beam
Of mystical lights that heavenward stream,
The heart of a boy will dream God's dream.

O Norns, who sit by the pale sea's capes,
Loosen the wonderful shine !
The glamour of God hath a thousand shapes,
And every one divine.
Dartle and listen o'er the blue height ;
Drift and shimmer, flight on flight ;
The heart of a boy is God's delight.

O, clamber and weave with the Milky Way
The Rose in the East that sprang,
From star to star, with blossom and spray,
On heaven's gates to hang !

O Vine of the Morning, cling and climb,
Till the stars like birds in your branches chime !
The heart of a boy is God's springtime.

'Tis Dawn that shadows the glowing roof !
'Tis Light with the Dragon strives !
Ah, Night's black warp with the rainbow-woof
The shuttle of Destiny drives.
They swerve and falter, gather and fly,
Wane, and shiver, and slip from the sky—
O Norns, is the heart of a boy God's lie?

O Childless Ones, would your blind charms
Might seal our darling's eyes !
Dead, with the dead Dawn in his arms,
In the pale north Light lies.
Glimmer and glint, O fallen fire !
The lights of heaven like ghosts expire ;
The heart of a boy is God's desire.

O dream God dreamt ere the morning woke
Or ever the stars sang out ;
O glory diviner than ever broke,
Of the false, false dawn the shout !

FALSE DAWN

7

False dawn, false dawn, false dawn —

Alas, when God shall wake !

False dawn, false dawn, false dawn —

Alas, our young mistake !

False dawn, false dawn, false dawn —

O heart betrayed, break, break !

Love at the Door

WAKEN, love ! the night is dark,
I cannot wander more ;
O love, how canst thou slumber?
I perish at thy door !
O, deep as death thy dream,
Unless thou now awake,
And from the rain and darkness
Me to thy bosom take !

I lie upon the threshold
In the pelting outer storm ;
Yet in my grief-worn body
Love has his mortal form.
Open ! a god shall enter
And on thy eyes shall gaze
The face of the immortals,
Thine after many days.

But if thou wilt not hearken
And rise and ope the door,

And yield thy lover pity, —
O, never, nevermore,
Shalt thou hear the voice divinest
Nor unto morning win ;
Dead lies he in thy doorway,
And thou art dead within !

Taormina

GARDENS of olive, gardens of almond, gardens of lemon,
down to the shore,
Terrace on terrace, lost in the hollow ravines where the
stony torrents pour ;
Spurs of the mountain-side thrusting above them rocky
capcs in the quiet air,
Silvery-green with thorned vegetation, sprawling lobes of
the prickly pear ;
High up, the eagle-nest, small Mola's ruin, clinging and
hanging over the fall ;
Nobly the lofty, castle-cragged hilltop, famed Taormina,
looketh o'er all.
Southward the purple Mediterranean rounds the far-
shimmering, long-fingered capcs ;
Twenty sea-leagues has the light travelled ere out of azure
yon headland it shapes ;
Purple the distance, deep indigo under, save by the beach
the emerald floor,
Save just below where, ever emerging, lakes of mother-of-
pearl drift o'er ;

Deep purple northward, over the Straits, as far as the
long Calabrian blue ;
Front more majestic of sea-mountains nowhere is there
uplifted the whole earth through.
Seaward so vast the prospect envelops one-half of the
world of the wave and the sky ;
Landward the ribbon of hill-slanted orchards blossoming
down from the mountains high ;
Beautiful, mighty ; — yet ever I leave it, lose and forget
it in yon awful clime,
Ætna, out of the sea-floor raising slowly its long-skied
ridge sublime ;
Heavily snow-capped, girdled with forests, Ætna, the
bosom of frost and fire,
Roughened by lava-floods, bossed and sculptured, massive,
immense, alone, entire ;
Clear are the hundred white-coped craters sunk in the
wrinkled winter there ;
Smoke from the summit cloud-like trailing lessens and
swells and drags on the air ;
Ætna, the snow, the fire, the forest, lightning and flood
and ashy gale ;
Terrible out of thy caverns flowing, the burning heaven,
the dark hot hail !

Ætna, the garden-sweet mother of vineyard, corn-tilth,
and fruits that hang from the sky ;
Bee-pastured Ætna ; it charms me, it holds me, it fills
me — than life is it more nigh ;
Till into darkness withdrawn, dense darkness ; and far
below from the deep-set shore
Glimmers the long white surf, and uprises the old
Trinacrian roar.

“Italy, like a Dream”

ITALY, like a dream,
Unfolds before my eyes ;
But another fairer dream
Behind me lies ;
Could I turn from the dream that is
To where that first light flies —
Could I turn from the dream that was —
In a dream life dies !

One masters the spirit of life
Through love of life to be ;
I am not master, O Love, —
Thou slayest the will in me !
Give me the dream that is, —
Earth like heaven to see ;
Or grant the dream that was, —
Love's immortality !